

May 7, 2012

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chairman
Committee on Environment & Public Works

Dear Chairmen Boxer :

As you proceed to a House-Senate conference committee on the transportation reauthorizations bill to resolve differences between S. 1813 and H.R. 4348, we ask that, as a cosponsor of S 412, the Harbor Maintenance Act, you support inclusion of the enforcement provisions included in both of the original Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund bills that involve maintenance of our federal harbors.

The State of California is dependent upon the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) revenues to fund the critical maintenance dredging needs of our ports and harbors. This is a critical national maritime transportation issue, with more than 900 federal ports and harbors that require maintenance by the Army Corps of Engineers to ensure that our navigation system operates effectively. Yet only about half of the funds collected through a fee charged on shippers are actually appropriated for harbor maintenance, even though our harbors are in great need of dredging and other maintenance work. Ports and harbors support about 13 million jobs and account for \$4 trillion in economic impacts. Moving goods and cargo by ship helps relieve highway and rail congestion. Ensuring we have a viable, well-maintained navigation system is a vital component to our overall transportation infrastructure and supports our economic recovery and job creation.

The harbor maintenance provisions, contained in Sections 1533 and 401 of the Senate and House bills, respectively, would ensure that all funds deposited into the HMTF in a given fiscal year be fully expended to operate and maintain the navigation ports and harbors of the United States. We ask that this language be retained and strengthened further through an "enforcement of guarantees," language that should mirror that provided in Section 2(c) of the Harbor Maintenance Act (S. 412). Similar action was taken for aviation programs in the Aviation Investment and Reform Act for the 21st Century (AIR-21) to more closely tie aviation trust fund revenues with expenditures in the Airports and Airways Trust Fund. Given this precedent, we believe taking similar action for the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund is appropriate, and will provide consistent funding for our nation's ports and harbors.

Thank you for your support and consideration of our request. We appreciate your efforts to ensure our nation has a strong transportation infrastructure supporting jobs, growing our economy, and competing successfully in this global economy.

Sincerely,